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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 27 May 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Oh Joon	(Republic of Korea)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Ms. King
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2014/305)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2014/305)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

I request the Protocol Officer to escort His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to his seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency President Nikolić.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Atifete Jahjaga to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/305, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Farid Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: At the outset, I would like to express my solidarity with the people and authorities of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, who are facing an unprecedented natural disaster caused by widespread flooding. I also extend my heartfelt condolences to those who have lost their beloved family members, friends and colleagues as a result of that tragedy. I hope that the current rescue operations and assistance, including the efforts undertaken by the United Nations, will help alleviate their plight.

Let me now turn to recent developments in Kosovo and relations between Belgrade and Pristina. I should like to note the continuing commitment demonstrated by both sides to the European Union-led political dialogue. During the reporting period, the pace of implementation of last year's historic agreements was somewhat affected by the holding of early parliamentary elections in Serbia and the preparations for the forthcoming early legislative elections in Kosovo. I congratulate Serbia on the successful conduct of the elections, on 16 March, and the formation of a new Government, on 27 April, led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić.

The Assembly of Kosovo, in an extraordinary session held on 7 May, decided to dissolve itself with a vote of more than two-thirds of its members, including a majority of the representatives from the Kosovo Serb and other non-majority communities. The new elections for the Kosovo Assembly are scheduled to be held on 8 June, less than two weeks from now. The election campaign will start tomorrow, 28 May. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will provide technical assistance in the preparation and conduct of the elections. The European Union will deploy an election observation mission. I take this opportunity to call on all Kosovo residents, particularly members of the Kosovo Serb community, to take part in the forthcoming elections and exercise their democratic franchise.

Despite a slower pace of implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013, the parties have narrowed their remaining differences, including on the structure and staffing of the judiciary in northern Kosovo. An additional indicator of progress is the operational capability of the Kosovo Police in northern Kosovo. The total number of former Serbian Interior Ministry personnel integrated into the Kosovo Police under the terms of the 19 April Agreement has now reached 284. Other elements are continuing to be discussed between technical representatives and experts from each side. It is hoped that, once the forthcoming electoral process in Kosovo is complete and the new Government is in place, the dialogue will resume without delay and a crucial pending matter — the establishment of the association/community of Serb municipalities — will be tackled expeditiously, along with other issues of mutual interest and concern.

The Kosovo institutions have taken some important decisions since my last briefing. On 22 April, the Assembly of Kosovo ratified the exchange of letters between the Kosovo authorities and the European Union on the extension of the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) until 15 June 2016 and on the creation of a special court in relation to the allegations contained in the 2010 Council of Europe report on inhumane treatment and illicit trafficking of organs. The establishment of such a court should help strengthen the rule of law in Kosovo and ensure accountability.

On 6 March, the Kosovo authorities approved recommendations resulting from the strategic security sector review, including on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces. However, the Assembly of Kosovo has not taken a conclusive decision in this regard. Discussions on the key issues of electoral reform and extension of the provision of reserved seats for ethnic minority communities in the Kosovo Assembly have been deferred to the next Assembly.

Over recent months, a great deal of efforts was made to overcome challenges related to the finalization of municipal assembly statutes of the four Serbian-majority municipalities of northern Kosovo. On 15 May, the municipal assemblies in northern Kosovo approved amendments to their statutes, bringing them into compliance with relevant Kosovo legislation, as required by the Ministry of Local Government Administration. This is an important step forward in the implementation of the 19 April 2013 Agreement and the process of establishing the future association/community of Serb-majority municipalities.

There were a series of violent incidents in northern Kosovo, including an ambush on Kosovo police in Zubin Potok on 31 March, which resulted in injuries to three police officers, and an assault against EULEX in the same municipality on 25 April, in which EULEX vehicles were hit by bullets but fortunately no one was injured. The fatal attack on EULEX on 19 September of last year remains under investigation. We have condemned such criminal attacks and have urged all sides to strengthen their efforts to uphold law and order and bring the perpetrators to justice.

In Pristina, on 20 May, three defendants charged with war crimes in the case known as the Drenica group escaped custody in a medical clinic where they were receiving treatment. The individuals were among the group of former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, whose trial began on 23 May in the Basic Court of Mitrovica. Subsequently, a court order was issued for their detention, and the individuals were apprehended and sent to a high security prison.

We have persistently encouraged the various communities in Kosovo to continue working towards greater reconciliation and integration. Progress has been noted on some important issues, such as missing persons and the recognition of the survivors of sexual violence during the conflict. We commend Ms. Atifete Jahjaga for her leadership at the helm of Kosovo's efforts to raise public awareness of such issues. In this regard, we welcome the official launch, on 7 March, of the national council for the survivors of sexual violence related to the war, which we trust will focus on the plight of all affected persons, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or language.

With respect to missing persons, we welcome the continued efforts of both the Pristina and Belgrade delegations alike in the Working Group on Missing Persons. Exhumation work at the mass grave site in Raška, in south-central Serbia, has resumed under the auspices of the Serbian Government, with the involvement of international observers and Kosovo representatives. We encourage all efforts to ensure the transparency and professionalism of this work and particularly welcome the inclusion of visits by the family associations of missing persons to the site.

A common appreciation of the benefits of cultural heritage for all communities in Kosovo will also be an important step forward towards coexistence and reconciliation among the communities. Despite the efforts of the Kosovo authorities, regrettably, such awareness has yet to reach adequate levels. Similarly, efforts to promote inter-community reconciliation should be significantly strengthened. This will also contribute to further reducing ethnic-related incidents and to accelerating the return of internally displaced persons.

In the run-up to the elections, the issue of the unfinished Serbian Orthodox Church structure on the campus of the University of Pristina became a political issue. Some Kosovo Albanian officials have referred to this church as a "Milosevic-era monument", asserting that it should be demolished for having allegedly erected without the requisite building permits. An unfortunate exchange of statements involving political and religious leaders followed. We strongly encourage

the leaders in Kosovo communities, as well as the leaders in Belgrade and Pristina, to take a constructive, prudent and forward-looking approach in addressing such a sensitive public issue.

Despite strong condemnation against participation of Kosovo residents in foreign conflicts, including by the Islamic Community of Kosovo, the matter remains a concern. On 9 April, international attention was drawn to reports of suicide bombing by a 22-year-old Kosovo Albanian in Fallujah, Iraq. Several other young Kosovo Albanians have been reported killed while fighting in Syria and Iraq in recent months. We encourage the Kosovo authorities to build on the measures they have already taken in cooperation with international stakeholders in order to ensure that such events cease once and for all.

On 2 May, Kosovo concluded negotiations with the European Commission on its Stabilization and Association Agreement.The negotiations began last October, and the Agreement should help Kosovo advance its European integration agenda further. On 6 May, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Mr. Štefan Füle, visited Pristina, where he discussed with Kosovo leaders key issues on the European Union-Kosovo agenda, including the normalization process with Belgrade, the rule of law and other areas that have been identified for reform. A day before his visit to Kosovo, Commissioner Füle was in Belgrade, just after a visit by the European Union High Representative, Ms. Catherine Ashton, to meet with Serbia's President Tomislav Nikolić and Prime Minister Vučić. Given that dynamic, and the current dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina, it is apparent that the European perspective will continue to be a key determinant and incentive for Kosovo's political, institutional and socioeconomic progress.

It is essential that Belgrade and Pristina stay on track to achieve full implementation of the agreement of 19 April 2013. Equally important are coordinated efforts to make the best use of European and other multilateral and bilateral assistance to local programmes and projects in Kosovo, so that the people of Kosovo can fully benefit and build a better life. In that regard, the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) will continue to engage fully in Kosovo, in cooperation and coordination with other international, regional and local partners, within its status-neutral framework, with the aim of making the best use of its resources and relations with all communities.

I would like to conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, and all the members of the Council for their valuable engagement with both parties and their continuing support for the work of UNMIK.

The President: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would first like to greet you, Mr. President, and thank you for convening this meeting of the Security Council on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 21 January through 15 April, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). Serbia has full confidence in the United Nations and greatly appreciates the contribution it has made to resolving numerous open issues in Kosovo and Metohija. The Council's quarterly meetings on UNMIK, such as this one, convened under resolution 1244 (1999) — the sole valid legal framework for the international presence in this part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia — also contribute to this.

Since I am taking the floor in the Security Council for the first time, I would like to present an overview, in some detail, of the events underlying the problems under consideration today so as to be able to decide which of them we can work out together.

I am very pleased to be addressing the Council as the Head of a State which, through its concrete actions and reasonable and patient policies and by its continuing to engage in thoughtful dialogue with the provisional institutions in Pristina during this period, has affirmed the sincere and willing compromise solutions aimed at ensuring the peaceful coexistence of the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija. The work of the State authorities has been extremely difficult due to the unfavourable circumstances in which the negotiations have been conducted — that is, intensive promotion of Kosovo's independence, which presents a unilateral act of secession to Belgrade. The Council will agree that for a small country like Serbia there can be no greater challenge than the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The dialogue with Pristina took place in an atmosphere inherited from the sponsorship of Kosovo's

independence, which is unfortunately advocated by some influential States. However, the dialogue with representatives of the provisional institutions of self-government in Pristina, held under the auspices of the European Union (EU), has yielded remarkable results. I would like to take this opportunity to thank, in particular, Baroness Catherine Ashton, who on behalf of the European Union mediated the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina with wisdom and patience. April marked the anniversary of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, a true watershed and a new chapter in relations between Belgrade and Pristina, progress that was welcomed by the entire world. Serbia has unequivocally demonstrated that it is a constructive partner and that it is ready to compromise in order to stabilize the situation and take the whole region forward.

UNMIK's continuing 15-year, status-neutral presence under resolution 1244 (1999), which is as binding today as it has ever been, is the last bulwark against the policy of promoting the unilaterally declared independence for Kosovo. As we have warned on a number of occasions, the precedent set by the declaration of Kosovo's independence has resulted in porous State borders and potential new focal points for crisis that have also affected the continent of Europe more generally. All this testifies to the importance of abiding by the fundamental principles on which the United Nations was founded and to which many United Nations Member States, including Serbia, are committed to respecting and defending.

International law is based on sources derived from international conventions, customary law and generally accepted rules. Any decision, just or unjust, must follow particular rules or regulations. The very existence of international law is a guarantee of legal certainty that precludes voluntarism and arbitrariness as well as ensuring legality. Without it, civilization today would be no different from that of medieval times, and we would have learned nothing from the past.

International relations, however, also depend on precedents imposed by some countries, possibly even by force. Such a precedent was created by Kosovo and Metohija's unilateral secession from Serbia. Paradoxically, in this case, a precedent was established that, it was claimed, was in fact not a precedent. And then came Crimea, where the people and authorities of that peninsula, in declaring their independence, referred to the famous precedent of Kosovo, which , they said, Western countries themselves helped to create. Western officials immediately responded that the Kosovo precedent was sui generis, thus de facto and de jure denying the essence of a precedent, which is a decision creating a new rule that can apply to similar or analogous cases in the future. To sum up, we will have to coin a new way to define a precedent that is not a precedent. In my opinion, such a phenomenon is contrary to logic. It negates scientific achievements, respect for international law and the fact that all countries of the world, big or small, are equal.

Serbia's territorial integrity is defined in article 8 of its Constitution, which states that the territory of the Republic of Serbia is integral and indivisible and its borders inviolable, and that the Province of Kosovo and Metohija, as an autonomous entity, is an integral part of the territory of the sovereign State of Serbia. That would still be the case had it not been for the creation of the Kosovo precedent, which launched an era of consistency in the inconsistent application of international law.

A great many countries have recognized Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence, which split off part of a sovereign territory that had no right to secede. And yet other nations' identical decisions, in identical situations, have been declared null and void. Is this justice and equity, or an exhibition of might-is-right? We who represent small nations seek justice. Serbia has always respected, without exception, the territorial integrity of United Nations Member States. Might, where there is no right, is reprehensible. It should thus go hand in hand with justice — in other words, what is mighty should be just, and what is just will be mighty. Serbia expects that justice and equity should be equally applied in its case, no more and no less than for other countries.

Serbia does not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija, but it is engaged in negotiations with it and will continue to do so, with a view to ensuring peace and prosperity for all the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija. That is the unwavering position of the current Government and will be the position of any future Governments.

Let me clarify — Serbia will not be forced to recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija by attrition. No one will win an election in Serbia if he or she makes such a commitment or accepts Kosovo and Metohija's independence as a fait

accompli. Such an attitude is not evidence of rigidity; rather, it is the result of an aspiration to survive. No one should expect us to willingly and passively submit to our own destruction. Serbia is resolutely against the promotion of Kosovo's independence. If that were not the case, the survival of the Kosovo Serbs would be at the mercy of the so-called altered situation on the ground. No one would be spared assimilation or final exodus, which would result in all traces of their existence being wiped out.

Serbia's wealth and strength lie in its unity in diversity and in the respect and understanding it has for others. With more than 27 nations, cultures and languages, it is both unique and diverse, and under Serbia's Constitution minorities have even more rights than do citizens of Serbian nationality. That wealth is the result of Serbia's geography. Because we are at the crossroads between East and West, we have always been the setting for confrontation between interests from the outside. Whether orchestrated or organic, incidents from those confrontations have become triggers for war, suffering and loss of life.

In the recent past, circumstances have become extremely complicated, with ethnic cleansing and pogroms against Serbians and the destruction of their holy places and of cultural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. At the same time, we have been identified as the sole party responsible. Does the greatest responsibility lie in defending people, even members of the Albanian community who were not ready to commit crimes and hate others, and in trying to protect territories? Can foreign policy missteps and misunderstanding of international relations and geostrategic interests be considered responsibility?

Serbian forces withdrew from the country's own territory of Kosovo and Metohija pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999) after 78 days of a NATO bombing campaign that took place without the Security Council's authorization. During the air strikes, 2,300 missiles were dropped, with the use of prohibited depleted uranium ordnance, cluster bombs and electromagnetic fibre weapons against thermal power plants and other power transmission systems. The bombing of oil refineries provoked black and acid rain, while oil and oil derivatives and toxic chemicals contaminated the water supply systems in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and other Balkan countries. More than 5 million people lived without electricity and water.

Some 200 industrial plants, eight power stations and infrastructure facilities, including 82 bridges, seven railway stations, six airports and a multitude of roads, were destroyed or seriously damaged. More than 40,000 buildings, 422 educational institutions — schools, universities and dormitories — 48 medical centres, including hospitals and clinics, the building housing the national television broadcasting company and 74 television relays were demolished. Also destroyed or demolished were around 90 cultural, historical and architectural places of interest, including 16 Christian Orthodox and Roman Catholic monasteries.

During the bombing, nearly 2,000 civilians were killed and 7,000 wounded; 30 per cent of these were children. More than 750,000 inhabitants of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia left their homes in search of a normal life beyond the borders of their own country. One in every four inhabitants was deprived of his or her livelihood. The final figures of the damage done are still not known; according to various estimates, the damage amounts to dozens of billions of United States dollars.

I am not complaining today about the pain and suffering inflicted upon us. I do not deny individual responsibility for the crimes committed against the Albanian population and I insist that those responsible be held accountable. But I disagree that in a conflict between a State and separatists, there could be only one responsible party, namely, the sovereign State. I am not complaining and I am not asking for the payment of war reparations in the classic sense, but as long as I am President of Serbia I will remind the Council of its obligation to compensate us for the enormous, irreparable damage caused to our civilian facilities and to the economy as a whole. The international community can redress that historical wrong only if it helps Serbia alleviate the consequences of bombing by repairing and rebuilding the damaged infrastructure, economy and public and cultural institutions. Every day an ever greater number of officials of the countries that took part in the bombing of Serbia also demand justice for Serbia. The damage is too high to be remedied by Serbia alone.

By engaging in negotiations with Pristina at the highest level, by acting responsibly and patiently, and by signing the Brussels Agreement, we have made it possible for the first time since the bombings for Serbs, Albanians and other nations in Kosovo and Metohija to live together. It is more now important than ever that

both parties be truly committed to dialogue; otherwise, the idea of a tranquil life together will become a dead letter.

I am sure that the European Union will provide valuable assistance to us in building confidence, in particular in the further course of Brussels negotiations and in the framework of European integration. We also see the start of the accession talks with the EU as an impetus to further work on improving living conditions for Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, as we are convinced at present that a constructive approach to fostering European values will be fully embraced by Serbian society. The fact that accession negotiations were opened on 21 January 2014 and that a screening for Chapter 35 negotiations was held shows that Serbia has fulfilled its obligations resulting from the Brussels Agreement in a timely manner and that it has approached the dialogue itself in a constructive spirit.

However, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/305) states that Kosovo is conducting negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. Serbia has no mechanisms at its disposal to prevent that, but it may ask certain questions. Is the European Union a union of States or a union of States with a para-State? Will it once again set a precedent without a precedent? According to that precedent, provinces of all Member States will also be eligible to become Member States. Serbia considers that, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), only UNMIK may, on behalf of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, conduct negotiations on stabilization and association.

The European Union must see to it that international law is respected and observe the rules on the basis of which it came into existence; otherwise, its very foundations will be at risk. If a decision is made to the effect that Kosovo and Metohija may negotiate with the European Union independently, it would lead the European family to lawlessness and chaos, with each party acting in its own individual interest.

In order to be able to ensure the best possible results in the implementation of the Brussels Agreement we must establish much clearer rules and build much greater confidence. In parallel with negotiations, the Albanian side has worked to strengthen their independent State through so-called low-intensity terror against the Serb population, which is totally unacceptable to Serbia. Low intensity ethnic crimes may suffice to impose serious constraints on the freedom of movement of Serbs and other non-Albanians whose life is defined by a complex number of minor restrictions — prohibitions on travel alone or by night, choice of time and place to do errands, restrictive use of Serbian language in public, safe attendance of schools, and so on. Public condemnation of ethnically motivated incidents could definitely contribute to inter-ethnic dialogue and tolerance, including the raising of awareness that the future lies with multi-ethnicity and acceptance of returnees from other ethnic groups.

The introduction of procedures and administrative obstacles has prevented the return of Serbs. Since 1999, less than 5 per cent of the expelled Serbs have returned to Kosovo and Metohija. The demographic picture is far from the much vaunted multi-ethnicity of our southern province, which is best illustrated by the fact that there have been only 50 voluntary returns to the province. That is far below any acceptable minimum. The international community has not discharged one of the main tasks entrusted to it under resolution 1244 (1999) — the free and unimpeded sustainable return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes.

Serbs and other minority communities in the region of Kosovo and Metohija still face problems. Their freedom of movement continues to be restricted and impeded. Their security and the free use of their own language has not been respected, nor have their access to institutions and the right to participate in elections and their right to vote. There are no appropriate mechanisms for the restitution of dispossessed property or mechanisms for preventing property from being repossessed following eviction of occupants. Entry into possession is also prevented. Returnees are not given free choice of place of return nor are there conditions for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons. Even if they somehow decide to return, local communities go out of their way to make them feel unaccepted and unacceptable.

Eighteen incidents and attacks on temples and property of the Serbian Orthodox Church have been recorded, including the latest wave of threats against Orthodox places of worship ranging from the graffiti scribbled on the monastery of Visoki Dečani to the announcement that the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina will be razed. At the same time, we welcome UNMIK's resolute response to declare null and void the decision of the municipal authorities of Pristina to deny the Serbian Orthodox Church the right to use land on

which the Church of Christ the Saviour had been built in the centre of the city.

Lastly, constant attempts at renaming and obliterating the existence of Serbian cultural and religious heritage, coupled with unlawful sales of the property owned by the Republic of Serbia, continue unabated.

The current discriminatory treatment of minority communities makes it impossible for their members to lead normal lives, especially with respect to the enjoyment of all rights legally provided for in instruments in force in Kosovo and Metohija. The non-discrimination law promulgated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General himself provides special protection to minority communities, bans all forms of discrimination and protects individuals not only against discriminatory acts of public authorities, but also against discriminatory acts of legal and natural persons. Regrettably, UNMIK and the Pristina institutions have not followed up on the high quality of that legal text with concrete and appropriate measures to implement it, which has allowed gross violations of the law and everyday instances of dramatic discrimination.

We highly appreciate the constructive approach taken by the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, as well as by the organizations working under the United Nations umbrella, including the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). They have created conditions for all sides to work together on improving the living conditions and respect for the human rights of all inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija, regardless of their ethnicity. I believe that the Council will agree that disagreements with regard to the question of the status of Kosovo and Metohija should not stand in the way of efforts aimed at working together towards finding practical solutions to issues that Pristina has been sweeping under the carpet for many years. Therefore, I believe that a decision to downsize UNMIK and reduce the number of international personnel would have an outright negative effect on the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and affect the execution of the functions entrusted to the Mission.

Consequently, I call on the Council, under the roof of the United Nations, to resist attempts to marginalize the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and Metohija and to attach relative importance to its role within the overall international and security presence in the province. I ask the Council to make itself both more visible and more effective in the discharge of its mission, as it works together with other international players, such as EULEX, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and UNMIK, which are also active under United Nations auspices. In the light of the intended modification of the mandates of those missions under the pretext of a changed actual situation on the ground, allegedly as a result of the reaching of the Brussels Agreement, I draw attention to the argument that this cannot alter the binding nature of resolution 1244 (1999).

In that context, I am opposed to the resort to such excuses as being overburdened and focused on other, more urgent matters instead of convening Security Council meetings devoted to considering the situation in Kosovo and Metohija more frequently. Great expectations and the increasing requests of Belgrade and Pristina concerning the implementation of the Brussels Agreement require the Council's meetings be held with undiminished momentum so as to ensure that its members are regularly provided with insight into the situation on the ground. The coming period will be crucial for the implementation of the arrangements made and for the further normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. That process must take place in full sight of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and Metohija and the Security Council.

We support the initiative to set up a special court and an office of the prosecutor based outside the territory of Kosovo and Metohija to try all cases resulting from the investigations carried out by the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force. Serbia will lend its full support to the efforts to bring all those responsible to justice, as it has done in the past.

However, stability has not been promoted by the arrest of Oliver Ivanović, a mayoral candidate for North Mitrovica. We expect the problem of secret indictments, which we have warned about for years, to be resolved. With witness accounts as the only evidence, witnesses must testify in an orchestrated manner 15 years after the crimes were allegedly committed. Mr. Ivanović, who is being detained in a prison in Mitrovica, was arrested on the basis of such testimony. In addition, the appellate court failed to provide an explanation as to why the legal deadline to act upon his arrest appeal was allowed to lapse. The Republic of Serbia once again most vigorously protests the arrest of Oliver Ivanović and demands his release from prison along with an explanation as to why he was arrested in the run-up to

the mayoral elections in northern Mitrovica, where he stood as one of the candidates.

Although the overall situation, as indicated in the report for the period from 21 January to 15 April, has been described as relatively stable, I believe that this limited period of time does not reflect the general situation in Kosovo and Metohija. The circumstances are characterized by the substantial gap between the professed benchmarks and respect for human rights and the actual situation. In considering the generally made assessments presented as fact for a limited period of time, it seems to me that we forget that it only takes a spark like the one in the pogrom of March 2004 to escalate dormant tensions.

Despite the continued international presence, impunity, relative importance and depersonalization of the crimes committed from 1999 onwards send a bad message, that of fear to the Serbs and other peoples in Kosovo and Metohija. This means that crimes are not punished, while further attacks are encouraged because they remain outside the reach of justice. We note that the Pristina institutions and the international community have done next to nothing to protect Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanians, particularly the most vulnerable people like internally displaced persons.

Serbia has encouraged its compatriots in Kosovo to go to the polls in the local elections. It encouraged them to do so in order to strengthen their legitimacy, under the roof of the community of Serbian municipalities, the establishment of which is envisaged in the Brussels Agreement, therefore guaranteeing their survival and the realization of their rights. Despite having lived in fear and uncertainty for years, they are still ready for reconciliation and have faith that their coexistence with Albanians is possible after all.

However, in preparing themselves for the elections, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina, preparing themselves for the elections, have done all they could to challenge the voting right of Serbs. Calling the internally displaced persons to mark their vote on the forms with the symbol of an independent State, which has gained its independence by driving them out of their ancestral homes — a quarter of a million of them — is an example of the utter hypocrisy and provocation.

By manipulating the voting registries, Pristina attempted to put in place a new, forcibly changed ethnic structure and therefore directly influence the result of the vote. For all the pledges made and emphasizing the commitment to multi-ethnicity as democratic values and human rights, Pristina in practice consistently applied measures discouraging and dissuading Kosovo Serbs to participate in the public life of Kosovo.

Unilateral actions by Pristina announcing the revision of electoral rules at the expense of Serbs and displaced persons are unacceptable and undermine the legitimacy of the forthcoming general election scheduled for 8 June. This time, Belgrade will, after careful consideration, decide whether to call on Kosovo Serbs to go to the polls or not. We demand that Pristina fulfil the basic precondition of enabling the equal right to vote without discrimination to Kosovo Serbs and other minorities in Kosovo and Metohija, as also indicated in the report on the work of UNMIK that is under consideration today. The actions of Pristina, as observed by UNMIK, is in direct contravention of its declared readiness and openness to increase mutual trust among all communities in Kosovo and Metohija. That is the purpose of the ongoing dialogue in which Serbia has invested considerably.

Therefore, we call on our partners and friends at the United Nations to support wholeheartedly and use their influence and authority to create conditions conducive to the equitable representation of numerous minority communities in all institutions without being overruled by the majority, as required also in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, where it is recognized that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities "contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live. Cases involving forged sales agreements have remained unsolved. Serb claims for compensation for the damage caused to their property have been refused on a massive scale. All this indicates a discriminatory implementation of regulations and rules.

The issue of minority rights also implies the restitution of property belonging to non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, among which Serbs constitute a majority. Moreover, there is the open question of the property owned by the State of Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church. The legal mechanisms established by UNMIK and EULEX to address property issues, assistance to courts to reduce the backlog of cases and provide adequate protection to individuals in cases of human rights violations have, regrettably,

not produced results. Such litigation accounts for 40 per cent of the unresolved cases before the courts in Kosovo and Metohija. Furthermore, the large number of forged ownership documents also impedes the upholding of property rights. The Kosovo Property Agency has iniated approximately 40,000 proceedings for the restitution of usurped land, while almost 700,000 plots of land have been occupied, according to unofficial data. One of the problems affecting property restitution is the lack of appropriate protection against eviction owing to unlawful repossession.

Also of interest is the observation with regard to the expropriation of Serbian property in Kosovo and Metohija based on the decision of the so-called Kosovo authorities for the purposes of highway construction. In the Gračanica municipality, for example, about 170 out of 213 expropriated properties belong to Serbs.

We have recently been informed that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government intend to alter the legal status of the Trepča industrial complex, the majority owner of which is the Republic of Serbia. The complex employs many Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija. The adoption of a new law designed to amend the ownership structure and the legal status of the Trepča complex would undoubtedly be another unilateral act that could result in altering the rights and the status of Trepča employees and members of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija. That is yet another attempt at illegal disposition of the property owned by the Republic of Serbia and a violation of fundamental property principles. Amendments to legal regulations would waive the rights of creditors. At this time, it is unclear how their claims will be dealt with, bearing in mind that only those creditors who have filed claims against Trepča company via the management team in charge of the establishment of the Community of Serbian Municipalities have claimed to be owed more than €268 million.

Furthermore, we also note that amendments have also been proposed in other areas. Such actions by Pristina show their inconsistency and disregard for the agreements reached. That is not the only area where laws are being amended before they have even been negotiated in Brussels. On the other hand, in areas in which there is agreement on amendments of the legal framework to help establish the Community of Serbian Municipalities, which is binding on Pristina, to date, no political will has been demonstrated to embark upon this process as an initial step towards implementing the agreements.

With the excuse of preserving peace, the Pristina side has been sabre-rattling. I am referring to the announced establishment of the so-called armed forces of Kosovo, which is not only in violation of the dialogue in which we have patiently invested, but also a gross violation of the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999). That resolution states that the international forces bear the responsibility for maintaining a secure environment for all inhabitants of the province, and therefore the possibility of creating the so-called armed forces is ruled out. Such an announcement poses a threat not only to stability in Serbia and the region, but also seriously undermines the authority and role of the United Nations in safeguarding international peace and security. In that context, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the sole legal framework for the continued international security presence in Kosovo and Metohija, the mandate of which has been clearly defined.

I recall that the Kosovo security force has been based on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a paramilitary formation that during the war in Kosovo and Metohija spearheaded terrorist actions and took part in organized crime. Even though the international community intended to calm the situation on the ground, to demilitarize the KLA and to transform it into security structures, it made a breach. Instead of punishing, it supported separatism and spurred continued political violence and ethnic hatred.

I ask the Council whether the security forces whose members belong to criminal structures and international terrorists could be relied on in regional and collective security frameworks. Will the international community give the green light to that act, particularly taking into account the announced establishment of the special criminal tribunal to hear cases involving crimes committed by the KLA in organ trafficking, as reported by the Special Rapporteur of the Council of Europe, Mr. Dick Marty?

The support of Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly for the Marty report, with a vast majority of votes of member States, should have served as a strong warning to the international community and to all institutions that the inhabitants of Kosovo cannot see protection in such structures, but see only a threat. There is no legal basis for the creation and operation of

Kosovo's armed forces. On the other hand, I recall that in resolution 1244 (1999), the international community agreed to the return of our forces to Kosovo and Metohija.

In the light of the intended reconfiguration of EULEX, I would like to remind the Council that under resolution 1244 (1999), UNMIK is vested with the sole executive and legislative powers in Kosovo and Metohija. Consequently, the consent of the United Nations was needed to engage EULEX. EULEX received legitimacy in accordance with the Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/44), dated 26 November 2008, provided that it acted in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), within the status-neutral framework of the United Nations. Although the powers and responsibilities of UNMIK relating to police, customs and the judiciary have almost entirely been transferred thereby to EULEX, it cannot be said that UNMIK has been replaced by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Therefore, the EULEX reconfiguration must be carried out in cooperation with UNMIK and the United Nations, upon their approval and consent.

Regarding the transfer of powers to the Provisional Institutions in Pristina, I am confident that all those present in the Council will agree that powers reserved for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General can be transferred to the Provisional Institutions only with his authorization. The fact that those powers were entrusted to EULEX in no way diminishes the powers and responsibilities of the Special Representative. The transfer of EULEX powers to the Provisional Institutions in Pristina is harmful and unfair because, on the one hand, it is unreasonable that Serbia would have no say in it, and, on the other hand, it is considered responsible for implementation of the Brussels Agreement.

We must not lose sight of the fact that behind all our speeches, behind all reports and statements made, there are people whose sole wish is to have normal living conditions for their families, who wish to work to educate their children and ensure their safe future and a happy childhood and who want to enjoy all the rights available to them. Therefore, the reports on the situation in Kosovo should not become mere statistics. People are not mere numbers. Whenever we review the situation in the province, we should ask ourselves how much we have helped the local population to live better. I am not certain that the conditions are ripe for the Council to remain less actively seized of the matter. Although significant progress has been made, the final goal still eludes us.

While appreciating the legitimate interests of the Albanian, Serb and other populations of Kosovo, and fully respecting the mandate of the United Nations, Serbia will resume dialogue, pending a mutually agreed and sustainable solution. I expect UNMIK and all international players to continue to work within an undiminished scope and with the same intensity, and I urge the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to adopt a more engaging approach. That is the only way to contribute to the creation of conditions for lasting reconciliation and find a final solution for the issue of Kosovo and Metohija.

According to the report of the Council of Europe entitled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo", hundreds of Serbs were kidnapped in Kosovo before, during and immediately after the 1999 conflict, and they were all sent to clandestine camps in the Republic of Albania. Many of them were forcibly operated on to harvest their organs, often in vivo, and later killed. Their organs were then sold on the international black market. The chief investigator into the allegations made in Dick Marty's report, international Prosecutor Clint Williamson, is in possession of a voluminous dossier on the crimes committed by former KLA members, and he is expected to hand it over to the judges of the special tribunal. The Prosecutor's dossier contains the names of 120 KLA commanders expected to be charged with the enforced disappearance of 320 Serbs in the regions of Orahovac, Drenica and Metohija.

Given that Serbia has done all it could to elucidate and prosecute all those who committed crimes against the Albanian population in Kosovo, we rightfully expect that the full truth will be known and that all those responsible for those heinous war crimes against Serbs in Kosovo will be punished. The families of Serb victims have an equal right, like other victims of crimes committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, to see that justice is done.

For the historical reconciliation of the two nations and a comprehensive solution for the problem of Kosovo, it is necessary that both sides make compromises. We have done our bit and will continue the dialogue with the same intensity and greatest constructiveness. However, Pristina must be made aware that there can be no durable and comprehensive solution without an agreement with Serbia and a Security Council decision.

Fifteen years have elapsed since the armed conflict in Kosovo and Metohija. Instead of living in the past and making mutual recriminations, it is time to reach a sustainable solution for the future of the two nations. We reach out a hand to touch the other side. Our hand is extended for the sake of our children and their children.

Last week, Serbia was hit by catastrophic floods, among the largest that have affected Europe in the last 100 years. The natural disaster claimed dozens of human lives, flooded towns and villages, destroyed arable lands, devastated the economy and caused inestimable damage. To diminish the magnitude of the catastrophe, the citizens heeded the call of their Government and expressed a high level of solidarity, fighting courageously and calmly to save what was possible to save. Unfortunately, notwithstanding an enormous will and desire, we cannot rebuild alone what has been destroyed. We need assistance to make it possible for the citizens to restore what they have lost, to redo agricultural work where possible and, where it is not, to help them weather the year and begin the next year under more normal conditions. The Council has received DVDs featuring some of the tragedy that hit Serbia. I would appreciate it if Council members viewed them. Humans do not demean themselves if they ask for help, but they are great only if they proffer help.

I express my gratitude to all countries and peoples that have helped or that will help Serbia in the coming period to overcome the tragedy and destruction brought about in catastrophic floods. We do not ask from others what they do not have, but only part of what they have in excess of their needs. Their little more is much for us, and it is necessary. For what is the meaning of life other than to show empathy and the will to help others.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Nikolić for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Atifete Jahjaga.

Ms. Jahjaga: It is a distinct pleasure to be with the Council here today to share the developments in the Republic of Kosovo over the last three months, a period during which we have achieved much progress in consolidating our State, extending the rule of law into all corners of our territory and contributing to the peace and stability of the whole region of South-Eastern Europe.

On behalf of the institutions of Kosovo and its citizens, I would like to express our appreciation to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his contribution to peace and stability in Kosovo and the region, and to the member countries of the Security Council for their interest in and support to the overall progress of Kosovo and the region.

I would also like to use this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to the President of Serbia and its citizens for the loss of lives and property as they have battled terrible floods in the past few weeks. President Nikolić, our thoughts and prayers are with your citizens affected by that tragic natural disaster.

Over the past several months, the Republic of Kosovo has shown political maturity, courage and leadership, and we have reaped tangible results, inching us closer to our overall goal of creating a multi-ethnic and multicultural State of equal citizens living in peace and prosperity regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation or race. Beyond our daily efforts to reach out, protect and integrate all of Kosovo's ethnic communities in the country's institutional and social life, we have constructively engaged with the Republic of Serbia in a thorough dialogue to normalize the relations between our States and to better the lives of our citizens.

Today Kosovo is a very different place from the destroyed country we inherited 15 years ago, with thousands of civilian deaths, many victims of torture and rape used as a tool of war, physical destruction and a legacy of hostilities and ethnic cleansing conducted by the Serbian forces. Recovery has not been easy. It took the generosity of the international community and the will of our citizens to get to where we stand today. It also took political will and courage to move on.

I take note of the support that Serbia's President, Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, has given to the process of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia in the normalization of the relations between our countries. While we have our differences over Kosovo, it is important that we recognize the reality of Kosovo's independence and its irreversibility.

In conjunction with the political progress, we have focused much of our attention on further consolidating our sovereignty, extending and strengthening the rule of law, building a sound basis for economic development and attracting much-needed foreign investment, solidifying credible institutions and showing political will and maturity to press ahead and come closer to realizing our aspiration to join the European Union (EU) and other international bodies.

The Republic of Kosovo remains committed to the dialogue process with the Republic of Serbia. In that process — which began in 2011 and culminated in the comprehensive First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013, facilitated by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, and supported by the international community — we have reached political and societal inclusion and consensus. We have gone beyond ideological boundaries and the daily political agendas. We are determined to move on and to move forward. The process of the dialogue with Serbia has been one of our major efforts, and its implications reach far beyond the consolidation of Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity and its membership in international organizations.

Agreements reached in Brussels are facilitating the full integration of the Serbian community in Kosovo. They have ended the operation of the illegal security structures supported by Serbia in parts of Kosovo, bringing the much-needed rule of law to the citizens of the northern part, who lived in an atmosphere of intimidation and lawlessness for far too long. Those agreements will bring daily services closer to the citizens of the northern municipalities. They have enhanced their freedom of movement as they have eased the movement of goods and increased the well-being of citizens on both sides of the border through proper revenue collection. While much of the focus has been on the north, we see those developments as positive for our entire society and beneficial to citizens across the country.

Agreements negotiated and signed in Brussels have boosted European perspectives for Kosovo and Serbia based on cooperation and good neighbourly relations, while setting them on distinctive paths to the European Union. The success of the dialogue process has confirmed once again the transformational power that the European Union project holds, paving the way to this Union and to us, to advance the momentum of the region's integration in its midst.

In that vein, I encourage the remaining five EU member States to recognize Kosovo's independence and further this perspective, which remains crucial to peace and stability in the Western Balkans and beyond. I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to more than 100 countries around the world for recognizing Kosovo's statehood and endorsing its vision for a democratic and multi-ethnic country. And I urge the remaining United Nations Members that have yet to recognize Kosovo to do so.

As we marked the first anniversary of the bilateral normalization agreement reached in Brussels through the EU mediation of April 2013 between the Prime Ministers of both countries, Kosovo institutions have focused on the successful implementation of its 15 points. We are convinced that its full implementation in a consistent and effective manner will further transform our future relations and bring stability to the region. We thank our partners — the European Union, for its role as facilitator and guarantor of the dialogue process, and the United States, a strong supporter of this process — and encourage them to continue to stand by us as we move forward.

Considerable progress has been achieved in the implementation of the agreements, and we expect it to gain momentum again once the electoral processes in both countries are completed. In particular I would like to again highlight the successful completion of the local elections organized throughout Kosovo, including the official inauguration and adoption of municipal statutes in accordance with Kosovo law, as called for in the Brussels Agreement. I am pleased to note that participation by the Serbian community and other ethnic communities in Kosovo has been satisfactory.

With the completion of the statutes of the four northern municipalities, the association of the Serb majority municipalities can be created in accordance with Kosovo's Constitution, laws and the European Charter of Local Self-Government to ensure the integration of the Serbian community in the country. The association will be an integral part of the Kosovo institutions.

Similarly, good progress has been made on the customs revenue collection at the northern border crossings, as well as the establishment of the development fund and its management board, the closure of the offices of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior operating in those municipalities and the integration of their personnel in the Kosovo police force, as stipulated in the Brussels Agreement. We look forward to concluding the agreement on dismantling the parallel courts at the next meeting in Brussels, and we expect Serbia to meet its responsibilities in ceasing the work of those courts and paving the way to the integration of Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors into Kosovo's justice system.

More remains to be done in the area of security in the four northern municipalities, including the disbandment of the remaining parallel structures. In this period, I note with concern instances of resistance to the establishment of rule of law in the four northern municipalities by paramilitary and criminal groups who have kept hostage the progress of the Serbiancommunity in Kosovo over the last 15 years. These structures also continue to endanger the staff of domestic and international law enforcement agencies, as witnessed recently with the attack on vehicles belonging to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), as well as with the erection of barricades that continue to prevent the freedom of movement. We expect the new Government in Serbia to keep its end of the Agreement and continue to engage constructively to ensure that Kosovo Serbs accept and endorse the agreements reached in Brussels in our joint efforts to bring stability and peace to our citizens, the region and beyond.

As we approach the early general elections in Kosovo, I have called on all mechanisms and all parties in Kosovo to ensure the stable environment and democratic and fair conditions that would allow for a free and inclusive vote. I reiterate my call on all Kosovo's ethnic communities to exercise their constitutional right through their full participation in the elections to choose their own representatives, who will give voice to their interests and demands, and to work jointly with us in strengthening democracy in Kosovo.

Kosovo's institutions remain committed to the return of all refugees and those displaced by the war. To make these returns sustainable, we have taken a comprehensive approach by investing in the housing sector, health and security, access to education and economic development. I am particularly encouraged that some of the recent returns have taken place in the urban centres, as well as by the cooperation of countries of the region in working with Kosovo's Government in facilitating these returns.

The Republic of Kosovo is committed to a comprehensive reform process that will enhance its future prospects for membership of the European Union (EU), the main priority that unifies the citizens of Kosovo and the option that enjoys institutional and societal consensus. Building on this tangible progress, I am pleased to inform the Council that earlier this month, Kosovo completed the negotiations on a stabilization and association agreement with the European Union as the first key step in our path to future membership. I look forward to the swift formalization of the results of the negotiations following the general elections in Kosovo, as we work to ensure a safe and sound environment for our citizens and a better quality of life as we pursue this European perspective. We have made significant progress in meeting the conditions to join the visa-free regime with the European Union, and we expect this process to be concluded soon.

During this period we have also completed a strategic review of our security sector. This whole-of-government process, conducted for the first time, was executed in an organic and transparent manner, studied the current and future security environment, and assessed the security needs of all our citizens and Kosovo's strategic security goals. Among the recommendations stemming from this process is the creation of the Kosovo armed forces, designed as a lightly armed defence force that we believe will meet the security challenges of Kosovo in the long term and be the vehicle through which we contribute to the Balkan region's collective security. The creation of the Kosovo armed forces will be a gradual, phased, decade-long and inclusive process that will seek not only the support of all the ethnic communities, but their active participation. Both security organizations in Kosovo have a good record of inclusiveness. Some 15 per cent of Kosovo's police force consists of officers from ethnic minorities, and about 9 per cent of the Kosovo Security Force are members of ethnic minorities.

On the creation of Kosovo armed forces, we have reached out to ethnic communities in Kosovo, the countries of the region and our international stakeholders in NATO to explain the outcomes of the review process, and we shall continue this important dialogue. In our effort to become security providers, Kosovo's institutions have and shall continue to act in partnership with the international community, and especially with NATO, in this process.

In our clear commitment to a European future for Kosovo, we have partnered with EULEX to strengthen the rule of law throughout the country. As we translate this strong commitment against corruption and organized crime into concrete actions, I have asked the European Union for an extension of the EULEX mandate until 2016. While EULEX will transition from an executive mandate into a mentoring role, its continued contribution to strengthening the independence of our multi-ethnic justice system will

be invaluable. Under the new mandate, EULEX will complete the pending cases and take up new ones upon the request of Kosovo's institutions. The new EULEX mandate, which was endorsed by Kosovo's Parliament, will continue to assist in the implementation, where agreed, of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.

In our efforts to stay true to the commitment to build a democratic Kosovo, at peace with itself and its neighbours, and the values and ideals enshrined in our Constitution, Kosovo's Parliament has endorsed the creation of a special court, with internal and external seats, to address war crime allegations arising from a report of the Council of Europe in 2010. The creation of the special court reflects Kosovo's determination to engage in an independent and impartial process to credibly address these allegations, as we believe that a commitment to justice for all is the only way to true reconciliation in the region.

As we speak here today, working-level teams from Kosovo and Serbia are digging out a mass grave in the Serbian town of Rudnica, unearthing the remains of some of the 1,712 missing from the Kosovo war. These are bodies of Kosovo Albanian civilians abducted and executed by Serbian forces during the war. Closing this chapter goes beyond politics. As leaders of our countries, it is our obligation to help bring closure to thousands of shattered families by empowering the Commissions working on the issue of the missing to investigate their fates and showing political will and courage to bring to justice those that perpetrated these horrendous crimes.

We have worked intensively to open a new chapter in Kosovo, where each and every citizen shall enjoy equality and live in freedom and peace. A lot has been achieved and much remains to be accomplished. I am encouraged by the change we have seen in the region and the endorsement that we have received from the international community, which stood by our side to offer clear and distinct perspectives to Kosovo and Serbia on their paths to the European Union.

Kosovo will stay committed to building good relations with its neighbours that promote cooperation and mutual trust — a paradigm shift for a region engulfed in war less than two decades ago. On this path, we were guided by the deep conviction that we must not allow a repetition of the painful past and the immeasurable suffering inflicted upon the lives of Kosovo's citizens. There will continue to be contradictions and tensions as we move forward, yet I believe that the progress achieved thus far should and will be maintained as we stand determined to secure a prosperous future for the young generations.

We want to continue to cement the gains we have made in strengthening Kosovo internally and consolidating it internationally, as the two processes are tightly linked. As we move forward, we seek the Council's help and guidance, as the success in Kosovo and the advancement of this momentum will be our joint legacy, just as today's Kosovo, living in peace and prosperity, is our joint success.

I would also like to add that there can be no more credible testimony to who did what during the 1990s than the verdicts of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which was established by the United Nations. Also, there can be no more authoritative indication of the legality of Kosovo's independence than the opinion of the International Court of Justice, a United Nations organ. I thank Council members for their attention and support for progress in Kosovo.

The President: I thank Ms. Jahjaga for her statement. I now give the floor to Council members.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation of President Tomislav Nikolić in this Council meeting. At the outset, we would like to express our condolences for the natural disaster that has struck Serbia. The Russian Federation has been providing assistance in overcoming the consequences of the disaster. We agree with the comments and share the assessments of President Nikolić. We also listened closely to the statement by Ms. Atifete Jahjaga. We would like to thank Mr. Zarif for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/305) on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

The United Nations Mission is the main international presence in the province. We call upon it to fully and actively implement its mandate. To do so, it needs to have all the necessary resources. We condemn attempts to undermine the role of UNMIK and we call on the Kosovo Albanian side to provide full-fledged cooperation with the United Nations presence.

We note the steps that have been taken towards normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina in the framework of dialogue at the highest political level. It is important for that work to lead to progress on ensuring the rights of the Serb population of the

province. We share the assessment in the report of the Secretary-General on the need to establish as quickly as possible a community of Serb municipalities of Kosovo as an instrument to protect collective Serb interests and, consequently, stability in the region as a whole.

The situation of Serbs in Kosovo continues to be rather dispiriting. There has been practically no progress in the return of Serbian refugees and the re-establishment of their property rights. People are afraid to return to Kosovo, given the threat of ethnically motivated violence, the lack of security guarantees and the failure of local authorities to protect their rights. It is important to recall that the creation of conditions to achieve that is one of the main demands of resolution 1244 (1999). We continue to witness ongoing looting and usurpation of Serb property and the desecration of Serb cemeteries. Exiled Serbs often cannot even visit the tombs of their ancestors, even during orthodox holidays. On the walls of Serbs monasteries and homes, insulting slogans and threats have appeared. Recently, a similar incident occurred in the monastery of Visoki Dečani, which is under the protection of NATO's Kosovo Force. Routine public condemnations by the Kosovo Albanian authorities is insufficient. There is a need for a true combatting of all forms of ethnic and religious intolerance. However, the results of investigations into a number of high-profile ethnic crimes have yet to be seen.

We believe that the initiative of creating the so-called Kosovo armed forces is counterproductive. Unfortunately, the report of the Secretary-General gives very vague assessments of such moves by Pristina.

We note the decision to extend the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) until June 2016. We call upon it to be guided by its mandate and to act in an entirely neutral manner. At the same time, as the report of the European Court of Auditors states, the effectiveness of EU assistance to Pristina in the area of the rule of law is insignificant. It is important to note that, of course, the authority of the Security Council cannot be delegated to a third party, in particular Pristina's structures.

We also welcome the Special Investigative Task Force's continued efforts to look into the crimes uncovered by the Council of Europe Special Rapporteur, Mr. Marty, including trafficking in human organs. All those who are guilty need to be brought to justice, and we hope that the unusual format of the Task Force will make it possible to ensure objective and impartial justice that will not be subject to any kind of political expediency.

The reports of participation by Kosovo Albanians in the Syrian conflict is very worrisome, in particular regarding their affiliation with Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq in the Levant. We very strongly support putting an end to that kind of activity.

We would like to confirm that Russia's position on the issue of Kosovo remains unchanged. We are in favour of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia. We believe that resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully relevant and lays out the obligations for all involved, as the international legal framework for the resolution of the Kosovo conflict.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his statement, and I welcome President Jahjaga and President Nikolić.

At the outset, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to President Nikolić following the disaster of exceptional magnitude that has affected his country and neighbouring States bordering the Sava. The international community stands side by side with them in that ordeal. The European Union (EU) and its member States have already mobilized and will continue to bring them the assistance they need.

A year has passed since the historic First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. It is crucial that the spirit of harmony and cooperation that has prevailed continue to reign between the parties in terms of its implementation and that the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade remain regular and of high quality. The parties must remain committed and engaged and retain a constructive spirit in the search for compromise.

We will pay attention, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General invites us to do, to the pursuit of the effective implementation of the Agreement of 19 April 2013, including the complete dismantling of Serb parallel structures in northern Kosovo; the early conclusion of a legal agreement; and finally the development, in a spirit of openness, of a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo, with real responsibilities.

We would also like to welcome the decision by the Kosovo Parliament, on 24 April, to ratify an exchange of letters between EU High Representative Catherine

Ashton and the President of Kosovo, whom I commend for adopting a responsible attitude. That exchange of letters and its approval by a large majority in Parliament shows Kosovar parties' and leaders' vision and thus their political maturity. Thanks to that exchange of letters, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the strategic review of which was conducted with close cooperation between Pristina and Brussels, has been extended for two additional years.

Moreover, the exchange of letters establishes a Kosovar court of law, the mechanisms of which will enable follow-up, under the best possible conditions, of the work carried out by Lead Prosecutor Williamson of the Special Investigative Task Force. That decision shows the desire of Kosovars to engage in a legal process that will allow for a credible and impartial response to serious allegations. By agreeing to shed light on acts allegedly committed by individuals, Kosovo thus demonstrates that it is ready to close the painful chapter of war, contribute to regional reconciliation and demonstrate its commitment to European values.

We condemn last month's incident involving a EULEX vehicle, which took place only a few months after the death of a Lithuanian officer in the Mission in the performance of his functions. It is unacceptable that those personnel are endangered, and we recall that all parties must respect the freedom of movement of troops and personnel deployed as part of the Kosovo Force and EULEX. However — and fortunately — Kosovo continues to enjoy a generally calm and stable situation.

France supports the development of a sovereign, peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, living in peace with its neighbours. The parliamentary elections are planned to take place on 8 June. We invite Kosovars from all communities to go to the polls and thus participate in the construction of their common destiny. We call for the holding of transparent and democratic elections, for which the European Union has already deployed a new election observation mission.

It is important to protect the rights of the various communities throughout the territory of Kosovo, in particular regarding their cultural and religious heritage. We strongly condemn any desecration of Serbian monasteries and cemeteries and, more generally, any attack against religious or cultural sites. Such actions should not go unpunished. They must be unanimously condemned for what they are: an obstacle to the emergence of a multi-ethnic State respectful of the rights of its minorities. We encourage fruitful dialogue launched between the authorities in Pristina and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo. In addition, it is also important to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons in conditions of safety and socioeconomic reintegration.

The positive developments seen in Kosovo over recent years must also be accompanied by concrete measures to strengthen the rule of law and transparency, and to enable the development of a climate favourable to business and economic development. Interference in judicial proceedings is not acceptable.

I conclude by commending the joint progress of Kosovo and Serbia towards Europe following the normalization of their relations. An important step in the negotiations between the European Commission and Pristina with a view towards the finalization of the Stabilization and Association Agreement was begun on 6 May. We hope it will soon be concluded.

Serbia, for its part, has made significant efforts in terms of internal reforms and relations with its neighbours. These culminated in the launch on 21 January of negotiations on accession to the European Union. It is now up to the two countries to uphold their commitments in the context of these negotiations with a view to continuing their respective European integration.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I join other speakers in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his comprehensive update on the situation in Kosovo. I also thank the President of Serbia and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga for their statements.

Nigeria expresses its deepest sympathy to the people of Serbia for the loss of life and substantial material damage caused by the recent floods in the country. The continued collaboration between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and other facilitators, such as the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), has helped with the consolidation of peace and stability in Kosovo and the attainment of progress in the implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. This is evident in the willingness of the parties to narrow their differences in their respective positions, thus making it easier to achieve consensus on residual issues.

The integration of former Serbian police officers into the Kosovo Police, as well as the ongoing European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina to commence accession negotiations are further indications of commitment towards the 19 April Agreement. These strategies, aimed at facilitating sustainable peace and stability, should be encouraged by all parties.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/305) indicates that members of the Assembly of Kosovo representing the Kosovo Serb and other minority communities have expressed concern that certain provisions of the draft law on general elections are setting new criteria for voter eligibility, which these groups believe will affect their eligibility to vote. The OSCE considers that draft law to be incompatible with other laws, and has acknowledged that the changes in the voter eligibility criteria might discourage participation in elections by minority voters. In the interests of fairness and inclusiveness, we believe that the law should take into consideration the concerns of the Serbs and other minority groups in Kosovo.

One of the recommendations emerging from the two-year Strategic Security Sector Review is for the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) to be transformed into the Kosovo armed forces. We note that neither NATO nor KFOR was involved in drafting the recommendation. That is significant, as the report indicates that any changes to the mandate and structure of the Kosovo Security Force might have an impact on NATO's provision of continued support to Kosovo.

The report also shows that the Serbian authorities and Kosovo Serb representatives have expressed serious reservations about the proposed transformation of the KSF into the Kosovo armed forces. Indeed, the Serbian authorities view it as a violation of resolution 1244 (1999). In that regard, we see the need for the Kosovo to proceed carefully with this aspect of its security sector review by taking into consideration the concerns of all stakeholders. We welcome the assurances given here today by Ms. Jahjaga that the authorities of Kosovo will continue their engagement on this issue.

While we acknowledge the gains made in the implementation of the first agreement, the situation in northern Kosovo remains a cause for concern. Increasing political tensions arising from arrest, detentions, protests and offences against EULEX give rise to heightened insecurity in Kosovo, and must be comprehensively addressed. Restrictions imposed on visits to Kosovo by Serbian officials, police actions in Shtërpcë/Štrpce and retaliatory attacks on the Kosovo Police are issues that require urgent attentions in order to avoid an escalation of tensions.

We urge all sides to take steps to prevent a relapse into violence while making strident efforts to reach a comprehensive and mutually acceptable solution to issues in the territory and the region. We also encourage the unimpeded resettlement of minority returnees and internally displaced persons in Kosovo. We believe that the effort of the Government to address the low rate of voluntary return and reintegration of displaced persons is vital. We take note of the strategy for communities and returns for 2014-2018 and hope that it will promote voluntary returns in the medium-to-long term.

We welcome the extension of the EULEX mandate until 14 June 2016 and commend its role in stabilizing the region. We look forward to the finalization of its strategic review, which will adjust its operations and improve the Mission's performance on the ground.

Finally, we commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif and his team for their unrelenting efforts in promoting peace and stability in Kosovo, as well as in the region. We assure him and his Mission of our continued support.

Ms. King (Australia): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his briefing to the Council on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) during the reporting period. I would also like to welcome to the Council the President of Serbia, Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, and the President of Kosovo, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga, and to thank them very much for their statements. I would also like to convey Australia's condolence to President Nikolić and to the communities in Serbia which have suffered the loss of family members in the unprecedented flooding. These losses are being deeply felt within affected communities in Australia.

Serbia and Kosovo have achieved remarkable progress over the past two years in their high-level political dialogue to normalize their relations and in the implementation of the 19 April 2013 agreement. As the Secretary-General says in his report (S/2014/305), the parties have been steadily narrowing their differences. We welcome the efforts of political leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina, and commend them for the progress they have made. The progress on the police

integration chapter of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013has been particularly important. The 284 former Serbian police officers now serving with the Kosovo police force enhance the trust that Kosovo Serbs have in Kosovar institutions and therefore represent an important confidence-building measure for the community. As the Secretary-General observes in his report, some challenges remain, including with regard to the establishment of the association of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo. Yet that, too, remains important. We encourage both sides to work towards finding an appropriate role for the association.

Australia commends the Kosovo Assembly's decision on 23 April to establish a special court within the Kosovo court system with seats within and outside Kosovo, designed to adjudicate allegations arising from the work of the Special Investigative Task Force. We acknowledge that this was a difficult and sensitive decision. In establishing a credible judicial process that we hope can finally resolve the grave allegations of organ trafficking during the 1990s conflict, Kosovo has reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law, and we commend this decision.

The proposal to reform Kosovo's security forces has also proved to be a sensitive issue, both domestically and regionally. Australia recognizes Kosovo's right as an independent nation to develop its security forces, particularly in the framework of its continued cooperation with NATO. We recommend that every effort be made to ensure that Kosovo's armed forces are developed in full transparency and dialogue with key regional neighbours.

We would like to acknowledge the importance of the continued deployment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We acknowledge the report of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on EULEX activities. EULEX's refocused mandate, voted on by the Kosovo Assembly and supported by President Jahjaga in her April letter, will ensure that EULEX can continue to investigate and prosecute serious organized crime and war crimes, and help build the capacity of Kosovo's multi-ethnic justice and police institutions until 15 June 2016. We condemn the attack on EULEX vehicles on 25 April and call for a swift and thorough investigation. We remain encouraged, however, that the overall security situation remains calm and that Kosovo remains on a positive trajectory. This lends credence, in our view, to the argument that the Security Council could decrease the frequency of its debates on the situation in Kosovo.

The return of the significant numbers of people displaced during the Kosovo conflict is an essential component of the long-term reconciliation process in Kosovo, but this cannot happen without a holistic approach to returns policy, addressing housing, security, freedom of movement, access to public services and employment opportunities. Australia welcomes Kosovo's new strategy for communities and returns for the period 2014-2018, and encourages all relevant Kosovar authorities to implement it fully.

To conclude, the opening by Serbia in January of accession talks with the European Union, and the conclusion of negotiations on a future stabilization and association agreement for Kosovo, are historic steps on the respective paths of both countries towards European integration. Following the understandable short pause during the general elections in Serbia, and the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Kosovo scheduled for 8 June, it is now important that the newly elected leaderships in Belgrade and Pristina re-engage with renewed purpose and vision in the political dialogue supported by the European Union. This will ensure that positive momentum is maintained and full normalization of relations achieved, to the mutual benefit and prosperity of the people of Serbia and Kosovo.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I am delighted to welcome to the Council Her Excellency President Atifete Jahjaga and His Excellency President Tomislav Nikolić.

We recognize that President Nikolić's visit comes at a very difficult time for Serbia, following the catastrophic flooding and tragic loss of life that his country has experienced in recent weeks. It has been devastating for the hundreds of thousands affected in Serbia and across the region. My Government is providing support in response to the floods through the coordinated approach of the European Union (EU). A team from London has travelled to Belgrade to look at how we can assist in a needs assessment to make the best possible use of the international support now and in future reconstruction efforts. The United Kingdom expresses its solidarity with the Serbian people, and

indeed all those in the region who are sufferir , as a result of this natural disaster.

Turning to the subject of the debate, the United Kingdom welcomes Kosovo's continued progress both internally and on the international stage. We welcome the fact that Kosovo is recognized by more than half the United Nations Member States, and we encourage those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so.

Regarding internal progress, the United Kingdom notes in particular the conclusion of local elections in Mitrovica North, and looks forward to similarly successful parliamentary elections next month. Before its dissolution, the Kosovo Assembly undertook two significant steps towards strengthening Kosovo's relationship with the European Union. The United Kingdom welcomes its ratification of an exchange of letters to extend the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) for two years, and the signing of the agreement on the content of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo. We continue to support the important work of EULEX, including its assistance in the implementation of the EU-facilitated dialogue agreements. In particular, we urge continued cooperation with EULEX operations on the part of communities and elected leaders in the north of Kosovo. We strongly condemn the attack on the EULEX convoy last month, and call on those with information about that incident, and about the murder of the Lithuanian customs officer last September, to help the police with their inquiries.

We are pleased to note the Kosovo Assembly's decision to establish the framework for a special court to hear any cases that may arise from the report of the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force, led by Clint Williamson. This has been a major achievement, and it demonstrates Kosovo's willingness to confront difficult rule-of-law issues. We urge all parties to continue to support this important judicial process.

The United Kingdom congratulates both Serbia and Kosovo on their efforts so far to normalize relations through the EU-faciliated dialogue. The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/305) rightly refers to the remarkable progress achieved since the start of the dialogue at prime-ministerial level in October 2012. It is now vital to sustain and build on that progress. It is perhaps inevitable that the combination of Serbian elections and forthcoming elections in Kosovo have resulted in a slowdown in the pace of the dialogue; nevertheless, we hope that the next meeting will take place soon, and we urge both sides to redouble their efforts, to avoid losing the impressive earlier momentum.

We urge both Belgrade and Pristina to continue implementing the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We recognize that steps have been taken, but full implementation of the dialogue agreement is not yet in sight. It is essential that the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities and its statute be agreed on soon, and that other commitments, such as on the judiciary and on telecommunications and energy, are concluded without further delay. We also call on both sides to ensure the maximum participation of all communities in Kosovo's upcoming national elections.

I would like to react to concerns that have been expressed by some about the proposed transition of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces. Neither the Kosovo Security Force nor the Kosovo armed forces is mentioned or prohibited by resolution 1244 (1999). The resolution does make specific reference to armed Kosovo Albanian groups. The Kosovo Security Force cannot, in our view, be classed as such, given that it is multi-ethnic and controlled by the civil State.

Reference has been made in statements today to Kosovo Albanians participating in foreign conflicts. We welcome the fact that there has been strong condemnation of such participation by numerous local and international actors, including the Islamic community of Kosovo. We also note the stated intention of the Kosovo authorities to establish clear legislation prohibiting such participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the launch by President Jahjaga in Kosovo on 7 March of a national council for survivors of sexual violence. I also note subsequent legislative amendments adopted by the Kosovo Assembly to recognize and protect survivors of sexual violence.

The Council is rightly very focused on the prevention of sexual violence. The United Kingdom supports efforts to deal effectively and sensitively with the consequences of sexual violence on those tragic occasions where it has happened. The United Kingdom welcomes the fact that the challenge is being addressed in Kosovo.

Finally, the United Kingdom reiterates its view that the Council should consider reducing the frequency with which we meet for these debates. The overall positive backdrop makes that, in our view, an appropriate step.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I would like to start by thanking Mr. Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia, and Her Excellency Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, President of Kosovo, for their statements.

Let me first of all express Lithuania's condolences to and solidarity with all those in Serbia affected by the worst flooding in the region in over a century. Lithuania, together with other international partners, stands ready to offer assistance and support to the flood victims.

I would like to note Kosovo's constructive approach in the negotiations for a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), which were formally completed on 6 May. That is a reflection of Kosovo's commitment to continuing comprehensive reforms on its European path.

Today, I would like to touch upon three elements — implementation of the Belgrade-Pristina First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, elections and the extension of the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).

During the reporting period, Belgrade and Pristina maintained active engagement in the EU-facilitated dialogue, even though the pace was somewhat reduced due to the electoral cycles in both Serbia and Kosovo. The continued commitment and political will of the leaders to proceed with the dialogue and implementation of the Agreement is commendable and encouraging. We welcome the statement made by the head of the new Government of Serbia, Mr. Vučić, that the continuation of the Brussels-based dialogue is a priority for his Government and is in the best interests of the Serbs in Kosovo.

We hope that after the results of the parliamentary elections in Kosovo on 8 June, tangible steps towards normalization of relations with Serbia will continue as well. The progress achieved so far must be sustained and further advanced. We trust that a fair and democratic conduct of the parliamentary elections in Kosovo will further strengthen the functioning of democracy there and will increase confidence in State institutions. The elections in Kosovo will be followed closely by the international community. We support the role of European Union Election Observation Mission and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in providing assistance to local authorities in conducting the elections in accordance with international standards.

At the moment, the Kosovo Force and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) continue to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability on the ground, while EULEX plays a key role in the consolidation of the rule of law. It is in Kosovo's legitimate interest to develop its own capabilities to ensure rule of law and security within its territory. That goal is fully achievable. Lithuania welcomes the decision of the Kosovo Assembly on the creation of a special court to follow-up on cases investigated by the Special Investigative Task Force on war crimes, as well as the invitation to extend the EULEX mandate for another two years.

Much remains to be done, however. The escape of the three high-profile war crimes suspects is a cause for concern. We call on the Kosovo authorities to ensure due process in war crimes investigations and to bring all perpetrators to justice. The situation in the north remains complex. Security gaps affect institutions, international actors and the daily life of local communities. A recent attack on 25 April against EULEX police reminded us of the 19 September 2013 attack, when a Lithuanian customs officer was killed. We call on the respective authorities to thoroughly investigate all such criminal acts and to bring their perpetrators to justice.

The implementation of the April Agreement aims at building inclusive societies and bridges between people. Tackling the legacies of the past and ensuring transitional and transnational justice for all the victims, including minority refugees and displaced persons, remains a cornerstone of peaceful cohabitation within the State and among the countries. In the context of progress in implementing the Belgrade-Pristina Agreement, my delegation, like others whose representatives have spoken before me, remains open to reviewing the current UNMIK debate cycle with a view to reducing its frequency, as well as considering a reduction of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Kosovo in accordance with the development of facts on the ground.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of Argentina, I would like to express our full solidarity with Serbia in the light of the regrettable situation it is experiencing due to the recent floods, which, as has been said, are the worst in the past 120 years. We would like to express our condolences to the family members of the victims, to the Government of Serbia and to the region as a whole at this difficult time.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report (S/2014/305) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We would also like to welcome the participation of President Tomislav Nikolić and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga.

Argentina, as is our tradition, would like to emphasize the important role that the United Nations is playing in Kosovo through UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights as well as in its cooperation with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which has maintained a neutral position with regard to the status of Kosovo under the auspices of the United Nations.

It is important to recall that Argentina voted in favour of resolution 1244 (1999) when it was also a member of the Security Council. Argentina believes that the resolution continues to be the international legal basis that applies in Kosovo to achieve a comprehensive solution through a political process and through negotiations. We reiterate once again the importance of UNMIK, not only in assisting the process of local elections that were held in November and December, last year but also in supporting Belgrade and Pristina, whose firm leadership has permitted the taking of the measures necessary to the full establishment of new municipal Governments in the north of Kosovo.

With regard to security, we welcome the fact that crime rates dropped during the reporting period and that the overall situation is stable. However, we are concerned that attacks against Serb Kosovars continue, especially in Pejë/Peć and in the town of Istog/Istok. We also condemn the repeated acts of vandalism against cemeteries and property of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is up to the corresponding authorities to take measures so that those acts are not repeated. Bearing that in mind, we think that the response of the Kosovo police with regard to crimes against ethnic minorities has improved and that the increase in patrolling in areas shared by different ethnic populations, as has occurred in the municipality of Klinë/Klina, could be an important step forward.

We welcome the commitment of the parties to continuing the high-level dialogue under the auspices of the European Union and we highlight the important progress achieved in implementing the historic First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We urge the parties to continue those efforts and consolidate the progress achieved, in particular by reaching an agreement on the establishment of the community or association of Serbian municipalities. We underline the progress in one area of the Agreement that is particularly sensitive, namely, the incorporation of the personnel of the Ministry of Interior of Serbia into the Kosovo police. We urge the parties to continue on that path through dialogue and the application of the Agreement in order to make progress on the related issue of the judiciary and other areas of the rule of law.

The Republic of Serbia, in particular, has continued to show its genuine commitment to the process of implementing the April 2013 Agreement. We would therefore encourage all the international stakeholders on the ground to continue working together in line with their respective mandates in order to contribute towards consolidating the achievements and the effective resolution of pending issues.

While we are encouraged that the security situation in Kosovo has been mostly calm, that does not mean that we should not continue to focus on the security situation in northern Mitrovica. In that regard, we reiterate that the important work of UNMIK continues to be essential in providing the greatest support to the political processes, in particular giving special attention to the implementation of the 19 April 2013 Agreement.

Argentina believes that it is very important to achieve full respect for the human rights of displaced persons and members of minority groups so that they can return to their places of origin and accede to substantive rights and not be the victims of discrimination or intimidation. While the adoption of a strategy for communities and returns for 2014-2018, which prioritizes housing construction, security, freedom of movement, access to public services and employment opportunities, and the fact that the situation of displaced Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians has improved are both positive, the report recognizes

that displaced Serbs continue to face difficulties. We urge the authorities to redouble their efforts to promote tolerance, respect and reconciliation and to confront all forms of discrimination.

Argentina remains concerned by the relatively low rate of voluntary returns of Kosovars to the region since their displacement 15 years ago. We call on the authorities to continue working to implement measures, such as the aforementioned strategy, to address those unresolved issues, which remain obstacles to facilitating the return and definitive reintegration of internally displaced persons.

It is also crucially important to continue to give priority to the tasks of overcoming the traces and legacy of the conflict, including the pending cases of 1,712 disappeared persons. We underscore the holding of new meetings of the Working Group on Missing Persons in Belgrade and Pristina, under the chairmanship of the International Committee of the Red Cross. UNMIK should continue to support and encourage efforts to ascertain the fate of disappeared persons. We also call for redoubled efforts and cooperation so that impunity is the not the last word on serious violations of human rights.

We highlight the work being done by UNMIK to support the rule of law, especially its cooperation with all the pertinent interested parties with regard to the main problems on the ground. We think that it is important for international presences to continue strengthening mutual cooperation in order to establish the appropriate conditions to implement the 19 April 2013 Agreement in the best way possible.

We conclude by highlighting the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing, and commend the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), under his leadership, for its achievements in implementing its mission. I thank His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia, and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga of Kosovo for their respective statements. Our thoughts and prayers go to the Serbian people, under the Serbian Government, after the devastating floods of last week.

Rwanda welcomes the continued dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade towards the full implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We commend the European Union (EU) for facilitating the ongoing dialogue and encourage both sides to remain engaged in fruitful discussions on their common objective of integration within the European Union.

We also acknowledge the achievements of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) in promoting the rule of law in Kosovo. We take note of the extension of EULEX mandate until 15 June 2016 and the continuation of the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force, which is focused on investigating the alleged trafficking of organs. We hope that the ongoing EULEX strategic review will enable the Mission to continue supporting Kosovo in strengthening the rule of law, particularly in the judiciary customs and police areas.

Rwanda welcomes the progress made towards the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, as demonstrated by the inclusion of former Serbian police officers who are now on active duty in northern Kosovo as part of the integration of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior personnel into the Kosovo police. That is an encouraging confidence-building effort, which we hope will be followed by a final agreement on the integration of Serbian parallel judicial institutions into Kosovo's legal system within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue.

On the return of displaced persons, we remain concerned that the rate of return remains relatively low. However, we welcome Kosovo's strategy for communities and returns for 2014-2018, which is aimed at improving and providing a conducive environment for returnees with regard to housing construction, local security, freedom of movement, access to public services and employment. We consider that initiative to be an important step in the overall integration of Serbs into Kosovo and we welcome the efforts of all municipalities south of the Ibar/Ibër river that have complied with the statutory requirement of appointing minority community officers to key positions.

On the security situation, we note that Kosovo remains generally stable and that the crime rate continues to decline. We underscore the central role and the important work done by the authorities and police in that regard. However, we are concerned about the

multiplication of incidents in northern Kosovo, mainly attacks on UNMIK convoys, the arrest of Kosovo Serb officials, violent protests and the restrictions on visits by Serbian officials. We also express concern at incidents affecting Kosovo Serbs, mainly violations of property, including property of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the desecration of graves and offensive graffiti. We urge the Kosovo authorities to redouble their efforts in preventing and investigating those incidents so that the authors can be held accountable. We stress the need for the Kosovo authorities to protect Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic minorities, which is a prerequisite for reconciliation.

In conclusion, as Kosovo prepares for parliamentary elections on 8 June, my delegation recognizes the tremendous efforts and progress made by both parties towards the full implementation of the 19 April 2013 Agreement. We encourage them to go the extra mile through dialogue, which is the only way to ensure sustainable peace between both sides. We thank the European Union for its continued facilitation and we pay tribute to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his continued commitment in implementing the UNMIK mandate.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive briefing. I welcome both Her Excellency the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, and His Excellency the President of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Nikolić, and thank them both for their statements. Allow me to convey the condolences of the Kingdom of Jordan to the Government of Serbia and its people and to the Governments of neighbouring countries for the victims of the flood that hit the Balkans region earlier this month.

The progress made in Kosovo and the calm security situation prompts a certain optimism at a time when the agenda of the Security Council is crowded with complex disputes and delicate situations in various regions. Today we must commend the leaders in Kosovo and the different parts of the Kosovar community for their dedication in building a unified multi-ethnic and democratic State and for their serious engagement with the international community. We call on all countries to support them in their endeavours.

Jordan supports the ongoing active participation of Belgrade and Pristina in the European Union-facilitated dialogue, and the serious commitment shown by both sides during those meetings. We applaud recent agreements regarding technical judicial matters. We believe that both parties share the responsibility to pursue the dialogue and to continue making progress towards the full and faithful implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations.

The European Union continues to play a pivotal role in advancing progress in that dialogue. We express the hope that the aspirations of both parties to integration into the European Union and to strengthening relations with regional organizations will contribute to promoting regional security and stability, as well as the development of cooperation among countries of the region in various fields in a manner that meets the aspirations of the people and contributes to their prosperity.

We welcome the ongoing cooperation between Kosovo and the European Union on extending the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the strategic review of the role of the Mission and its functions in the upcoming period of its mandate, while taking into account the progress made in the implementation of relevant agreements on the rule of law on the ground.

Ensuring the prosecution of the perpetrators of grave crimes committed during conflicts, regardless of the ethnicity of the perpetrator or the victim, is a main pillar of transitional justice. It is equally important in post-conflict societies seeking to consolidate reconciliation to ensure that all parties feel that justice in the future will always be sought and provided for in a fair and adequate manner. In that regard, Jordan commends the commitment of Kosovo to ensuring the rule of law and its establishment of a special court to look into the allegations contained in the 2010 Marty report.

All issues arising from the past conflict must continue to be addressed because they have a significant impact on the collective psychological state of the different communities in Kosovo and the region, including issues related to internally displaced persons, returnees and missing persons. We hope that UNMIK and other international organizations will continue to

contribute to addressing such issues in order to build trust and deepen reconciliation.

The successful conduct of local elections in the Republic of Kosovo is proof of the Government's commitment to building inclusive State institutions and of the abilities of the Kosovo authorities to manage the democratic process and to hold free and fair elections, as has been emphasized by international observers. Jordan hopes that preparations for the legislative elections in Kosovo will continue apace and with wide participation. We also hope that the elections will be held with equal success.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation to the Head of UNMIK for his and for the efforts of all UNMIK personnel in the implementation of all aspects of the Mission.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia, and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, President of Kosovo, and thank them for their statements.

On behalf of Chad, I would like to offer to President Nikolić and the Government and people of Serbia our sincerest condolences following the flooding that has taken so many lives and caused considerable material destruction.

Chad welcomes the ongoing, active participation of Serbia and Kosovo in the European Union-facilitated dialogue and that encouraging progress has been made in the implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. I commend the parties for pursuing the dialogue and for the progress that has been achieved. We welcome the integration of 284 former officials of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior into the Kosovo police. We urge the parties to redouble their efforts to establish the future association/community of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo. We welcome the measures that have been taken to establish the new municipal community safety councils in northern Kosovo following the 2013 elections.

We encourage the draft bill on general elections and call upon the authorities to work to ensure the integration and inclusion of everyone, particularly the Serbian population of Kosovo, as well as the other minority communities. The restoration of mutual trust among the communities will be a yardstick for the success of the ongoing talks. With regard to the initiative to transform the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces, all necessary precautions should be taken to study all aspects of the question, without excluding the possibility for Kosovo to create its own defence and security forces in the long term.

On the justice front, we congratulate the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo for its work under the authority the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the overall framework of resolution 1244 (1999). We welcome the decision to renew its mandate. We particularly welcome the agreement on the inclusion of Serbian parallel judicial institutions into the Kosovo system and the strengthening of the rule of law throughout Kosovo, as evidenced in several prosecutions and judgements that have been delivered in the area of organized crime and corruption. We also welcome the initiative of the Kosovo Government to create a special tribunal to consider war crimes. We welcome the agreement on the integration of Serbian parallel judicial institutions into the Kosovo legal system. We hope that a final agreement will be concluded under the European Union-promoted talks.

We note with satisfaction that with respect to security, the situation in Kosovo is stable, despite continued acts of theft, arson, attacks on property, and vandalism and desecration of cemeteries. Chad condemns such acts, which incite violence and hatred. We welcome the efforts of UNMIK to facilitate communication between the Kosovo authorities and INTERPOL and to establish a strategic interinstitutional cooperation plan to fight organized crime and corruption with the nomination of an anti-corruption national coordinator.

We welcome and encourage the Working Group on Missing Persons, which enjoys the participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNMIK and national and local authorities, although 1,712 persons remain missing since the end of the war in Kosovo. We also commend the Kosovo Government for approving a strategy on communities and the return of displaced persons for 2014-2018, guaranteeing all their necessary rights.

Finally, Chad encourages the entire international community, and the Security Council in particular, to support the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina through the European Union-facilitated dialogue. The resulting progress should inspire UNMIK

to meet expectations and better prepare in terms of facing future challenges.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks Mr. Farid Zarif for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2014/305). We also welcome His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga. We begin with a message of support to the countries of the Balkans that have been affected by the recent floods and welcome the solidarity among countries that were parties to the conflict that devastated the former-Yugoslavia 20 years ago.

Today, the Security Council is meeting for the fourth time since the signing of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We value the important progress achieved in its implementation. In particular, we highlight the agreement among the parties on the outstanding technical issues regarding the integration of Serbian parallel judicial institutions into the legal framework of Kosovo. Moreover, the active participation of Belgrade and Pristina in the dialogue facilitated by the European Union is essential to achieving their common objective of improving their cooperation with the Union's institutions. In that context, we commend Serbia's official launch of talks in Brussels on 21 January with a view to acceding to the European Union.

My country stresses the role of regional organizations in peacebuilding efforts and in re-establishing the rule of law. In that context, we call special attention to the efforts on the ground of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union Rule of Law Mission and to their contribution in restoring the rule of law and maintaining security in Kosovo. We recognize the role played by the European Union in bringing the parties closer together, which culminated in the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013.

We remain concerned about the complex situation of displaced persons in Kosovo. Chile highlights the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in resolving the problem. While local authorities have shown tolerance in allowing returns, efforts should be redoubled to avoid any hint of discrimination, particularly against minority populations. We also reiterate the importance of the ongoing implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at all levels so as to guarantee the participation of women in decision-making and the due consideration of their needs.

We stress the central role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in promoting peace and security in the area of human rights, which is a priority in fostering reconciliation among the communities. Only in an atmosphere of respect and adequate protection for fundamental human rights will it be possible to hope for national reconciliation and a future life in peace.

Despite the progress made in the political dialogue, we are concerned about certain cases in which the interim administration of Kosovo has acted contrary to the conditions agreed and defined under resolution 1244 (1999) for the status of Kosovo. That is why we express reservations with respect to the plan to transform the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces. We also call upon the provisional authorities of Kosovo to refrain from preventing Serbian authorities from entering the territory, in order to avoid any additional conflict.

Experience in other conflict situations has shown that reconciliation processes must be based on truth and justice. In that respect, we highlight the progress made by the parties in identifying missing persons. Especially relevant in that respect is the work carried out by the authorities of Serbia and Kosovo through the Working Group on Missing Persons, with the help of UNMIK. We must move forward in the search for truth and the whereabouts of every one of the missing.

We have amply demonstrated the importance of justice in peacebuilding efforts and the process of national reconciliation. We underscore the work carried out by EULEX in transitional matters and in strengthening the rule of law. In conclusion, we reaffirm the importance of resolution 1244 (1999) as a guiding document for Kosovo to promote reconciliation, stability and prosperous communities.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the President of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, in today's meeting and his statement. I also listened carefully to the statement made by Ms. Atifete Jahjaga.

The recent severe flooding in Serbia resulted in significant loss of life and property. China expresses condolences to the victims. Our sympathy goes out to the bereaved families and to the injured. China shall do all it can to provide support and assistance based on Serbia's needs.

China respects Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and understands the legitimate concerns over the issue of Kosovo. China believes that the best solution to the Kosovo issue lies in reaching agreements acceptable to all parties through dialogue and negotiation, within the framework of relevant Council resolutions and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

At present, the overall situation in Kosovo is calm. The two parties to the Kosovo issue are pursuing the dialogue, which has yielded some positive results that China welcomes. We encourage both parties to continue their dialogue and negotiation, overcome difficulties and challenges, actively implement the agreements previously reached, effectively protect the legitimate interests of all ethnic groups, and resolve the problem of the return of internally displaced persons so that all people will be able to collectively benefit from peace and development and build a better life.

Resolving the Kosovo issue in a proper way and building a Kosovo where all ethnic communities live harmoniously plays a part in the peace and stability of the Balkans and the rest of Europe. That is also a common goal of the international community. China encourages the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to continue to implement the Security Council's mandate under the leadership of Special Representative Zarif. It is China's hope that the international presence — including UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force — will strengthen coordination and cooperation in accordance with their respective mandates to continue to contribute to the peace, stability and development of Kosovo.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Zarif for his briefing. I would like to welcome President Jahjaga and President Nikolić to their first time before the Council, and thank them both for their statements.

I would like to express our deep condolences to all those in Serbia, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, who have suffered as a result of the devastating floods. We stand with them as they begin to recover and rebuild.

The United States commends both Serbia and Kosovo for their continued dedication to the European Union-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. Both Governments have made difficult decisions that are critical to realizing a more stable, peaceful and prosperous region. We would in particular like to recognize the efforts of President Jahjaga, the first and only female head of State in the Western Balkans, to promote inclusivity in Kosovo. We also thank the new Government in Serbia for its renewed commitment to continuing the normalization process, in line with Kosovo's legal and institutional framework and in accordance with the Agreement.

I would like to raise three points today: Kosovo's upcoming parliamentary elections, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), and Kosovo's strategic security review.

We welcome President Jahjaga's announcement that parliamentary elections will be held on 8 June. The 2013 municipal elections demonstrated Kosovo's capacity to meet international electoral standards, and it will be important for Kosovo's leaders to show the political will to do the same during this pre- and post-election period. We were pleased to hear President Jahjaga's assurances in this regard. Such open and fair political processes help Kosovo cement its place in Europe.

The United States commends the Kosovo Government and the Kosovo Assembly for their approval of the exchange of letters on the EULEX transition and the extension of its mandate, and on their support for establishing a special court to hear potential cases of the Special Investigative Task Force. We also thank the European Union for its continued role in Kosovo. The letters set out a new two-year EULEX mandate, taking into account Kosovo's progress since 2008, and detailed guidelines to ensure creation of an internationally credible judicial structure and process for any trials that may result from the work of the Task Force.

The strong vote by the Assembly underscored Kosovo's commitment to justice and the rule of law. Following elections next month, we look forward to the new Assembly's prompt consideration of related

implementing legislation. It is in our common interest to resolve the 2010 Council of Europe report allegations once and for all, to strengthen Kosovo's international credibility and to advance its European aspirations.

Finally, I would like to comment on Kosovo's strategic security sector review, which was facilitated by a team of United States advisors, to evaluate Kosovo's legitimate security needs. The final report released in March outlined a responsible plan to gradually develop, over a period of years, a limited territorial self-defence capacity, in accordance with Euro-Atlantic norms and built on the existing multi-ethnic Kosovo Security Force. This process has been conducted in a transparent and professional manner over the past two years.

In its facilitation role, the United States engaged the Government of Serbia on this issue on several occasions, and the Kosovo Government has briefed regional partners and NATO members on the review's recommendations to transfer the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) to the Kosovo armed forces, in keeping with resolution 1244 (1999). We are confident that with the involvement of NATO and regional partners, we can build trust between the two sides and ensure that the arrangements will strengthen the security and stability of the region. In this vein, we welcomed the written assurances of the Kosovo Government to NATO that reaffirm its earlier commitment, made in conjunction with the April 2013 Agreement, that the KSF and its successor would undertake no mission in the north without the prior concurrence of the Kosovo Force. Further, as a member of NATO, the United States notes that the Alliance's commitment to Kosovo remains unchanged.

We are moving towards the day when Kosovo and Serbia will be not only good neighbours, but partners in the European Union and Euro-Atlantic institutions. Kosovo has made great progress in consolidating its democracies since its declaration of independence. Over one half of United Nations Member States, including nine members of the Council, now recognize Kosovo as a sovereign and independent State. For the sake of greater stability in the region, we urge those States that have not recognized Kosovo to do so. We hope that the leaderships in Belgrade and Pristina will continue their positive momentum as they work to establish peaceful and secure environment that will allow their citizens to flourish. They will have full support of the United States in this regard.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing. I welcome the President of Kosovo, Her Excellency Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, and the President of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić.

At the outset, I would like to express Luxembourg's solidarity with and compassion for the victims of the floods in the Western Balkans. Our thoughts are with all those affected by the disaster.

During the period covered by the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/305), elections were held in Kosovo and Serbia. Despite the relative slowing in the pace of implementation of the agreements reached in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, important progress has been made since the beginning of the year. Discussions on the organization and scope of the judicial institutions in northern Kosovo have made good progress and will, we hope, be concluded shortly. The integration of police officers into Kosovo's police continued. The partial elections to elect the mayors of Mitrovica North took place without incident, and all the mayors were sworn in.

The Serb Government elected following the 16 March parliamentary elections has demonstrated its intention to pursue the European integration process, and we welcome that fact. That process requires a normalization of relations with Kosovo. Kosovars, for their part, will have a chance to make their voices heard at the polls on 8 June. We welcome the European Union's launching, on 20 May, of an electoral observer mission, which is working in close cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The quality of the electoral process in Kosovo will be important in gauging the young country's maturity, and we hope that the positive developments that began with the municipal elections in November 2013 will continue. We also encourage all Serbs in Kosovo to exercise that democratic right, which is also their duty as citizens.

Once the new Government of Kosovo is in place, the normalization process will be able to resume with renewed momentum. The implementation of the agreements reached thus far should continue. I would highlight in particular the establishment of an

association of Serb municipalities in Kosovo, which is at the heart of the historic agreement of 19 April 2013.

The pursuit of reforms aimed at guaranteeing the rule of law is crucial to Kosovo's European integration. It is therefore commendable that, on 23 April, Kosovo's parliament approved an exchange of letters between the President of Kosovo and the High Representative of the European Union, Catherine Ashton, with a view to extending the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to 15 June 2016.

Significant progress has been made since the deployment of EULEX in 2008. While adapting its work to promote enhanced responsibility for the Kosovars, EULEX will continue to play a key role in three areas: support to the Kosovar authorities to strengthen their institutions, the fight against organized crime and corruption, and bringing to justice perpetrators of war crimes and the most serious crimes, including through investigating the allegations contained in the report on inhumane treatment and human organ trafficking in Kosovo. We welcome the progress achieved by the Special Investigative Task Force and the preparations under way aimed at establishing a special tribunal to try those allegedly involved.

Luxembourg attaches particular importance to the fate of the 1,712 people missing since the end of the conflict in Kosovo. The exhumation work in the Rudnica quarry must continue with support from international partners and in the presence of Kosovar authorities in order for the victims' families to learn the fate of their loved ones.

We recognize the efforts by the Government of Kosovo to increase the rate of voluntary returns and promote the reintegration of those displaced. The strategy for communities and for returns of displaced persons for 2014-2018 in Kosovo is a step in the right direction. We welcome President Jahjaga's remarks reaffirming Kosovo's determination to eliminate the obstacles to the return of displaced persons, including Serbs.

For more than a year now, Serbia and Kosovo have been resolutely committed, under the auspices of the European Union, to the normalization their relations. The determination of their leaders has allowed the two countries to take crucial steps. Serbia began negotiations on joining the European Union on 21 January, and Kosovo concluded on 2 May its negotiations with the European Commission with a view to reaching in the coming months a Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo.

These positive developments should encourage Belgrade and Pristina to make irreversible progress on the path of reform and in the normalization of their relations. We are confident that the leaders and citizens of the two countries will show the commitment and courage necessary to realize their European future. As a faithful partner of solidarity of Serbia and of Kosovo, Luxembourg will spare no effort in supporting them in their endeavours.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Republic of Korea.

My delegation would like to thank Special Representative Farid Zarif for his briefing. We warmly welcome President Nikolić and President Jahjaga to the Council and thank them for their statements today. I would also like to express our deep sympathy and condolences to those affected by the recent floods in Serbia and other countries in the Balkans, and wish them a rapid recovery.

A year after the signing of the historic 19 April agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, there has been significant progress on their path towards the normalization of relations. Building on such hard-won gains, we look to Serbia and Kosovo to continue to engage constructively in the European Union-facilitated dialogue with a view to resolving the remaining issues expeditiously, including the establishment of the association/community of Serb municipalities.

While we commend such accomplishments, we remain concerned over violent incidents in northern Kosovo, such as the recent attacks on Kosovo Police and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), as well as the protests against their law enforcement activities. We believe that such incidents illustrate the need to strengthen the credibility of the justice system. In this regard, we stress the importance of the work of EULEX in consolidating the rule of law in Kosovo's institutions. We encourage leaders in the north, as well as in Belgrade and Pristina, to cooperate constructively with EULEX.

Lastly, we encourage the Kosovo authorities to promote the protection of minorities. In particular, further emphasis should be given to facilitating the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons. The strategy for the reintegration of repatriated person for 2014-2018 is a positive development in this regard.

We once again commend the entire staff of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, EULEX and other international partners for their tireless efforts for the continued peace and stability of Kosovo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

His Excellency President Nikolić has requested to take the floor to make a further statement.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I do not intend to make any comments on the statements by the Council members; they reflect the positions of their Governments. By commenting, I would perhaps put the citizens of my country at odds with the positions taken by some countries just because I do not agree with some Council members. I would simply ask members, when thinking about this problem, to think as if it happened in their own country. I wish that such a situation never occurs in other countries.

I wanted to address the Council again to thank members for their condolences and compassion towards the citizens of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia who have suffered due to the terrible flooding. Without international help, they will face great difficulties in alleviating the consequences. There is life beyond politics, outside of these walls, but I know that we will manage to live with the consequences with the help of our friends.

The President: Ms. Jahjaga has requested to take the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Jahjaga: In reference to the issue of the incidents on the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church as raised here by previous speakers, allow me to present our position. I have strongly and publicly condemned the recent incidents against the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, in particular the latest incident of graffiti on the gates of the Dečani monastery, which I recently had the pleasure to visit. Kosovo has a long tradition of interreligious tolerance and a history of preservation of our common cultural heritage. These acts go against the spirit of what we are trying to build in Kosovo. Any attempt to desecrate such objects of cult is totally unacceptable.

I have asked the authorities to swiftly bring to justice the perpetrators of such acts, and the authorities are dealing with these incidents. In the particular instance of the Dečani monastery, the police have opened a case file on that matter. No church, mosque or other place of worship will be destroyed in Kosovo. We have a long tradition of interfaith tolerance, and we will preserve it.

In reference to the issue of Syria as raised in the meeting, the problem of foreign fighters who have been recruited or who have joined the war in Syria has posed a challenge for all countries around the world. Unfortunately, the Republic of Kosovo is not immune to this problem either. But we have taken bold steps to curb this threat, and I want to assure the Council that we are confronting this matter effectively. Our approach has included legal and security measures, as well as outreach to the Kosovo public. Kosovo's leadership is united and vocal in condemning this phenomenon and discouraging our citizens from joining the fight in Syria. Our religious communities have also engaged in raising awareness about the negative implications that this has for Kosovo and the region. Kosovo's Government has drafted and approved a law that will punish, with 15 years' imprisonment, those who join this fight. We will revoke the citizenship of anyone joining the Syrian war. Our security mechanisms are working around the clock to address this challenge, and they have successfully conducted operations to prevent this problem. According to our estimates, we are talking about a fringe group that has joined the war in Syria. The absolute majority of Kosovo's citizens are determined in our fight against this negative phenomenon. Kosovo will not be a safe haven or a transit route for these elements, and we will continue to work with our partners and international security organizations to further address this matter.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.